



Tribal STAR Newsletter

Fall, 2004

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Tribal Community Identifies Challenges In Serving Tribal Youth

*"When we walk
upon Mother
Earth, we always
plant our feet
carefully because
we know the
faces of our
future
generations are
looking up at us
from beneath the
ground.*

*We never forget
them."*

"Oren Lyons,
Onondaga Nation"



Tribal STAR chose, as its method for gaining information from the Tribal and the greater community, the focus group model. The Tribal STAR team conducted seven focus groups over a period of several months. The groups served as a way for us to collect information regarding the gaps in services provided to rural Tribal foster youth who are exiting the foster care system. Current challenges as revealed by the Information gathered in the focus groups was as follows:

General

- Lack of resources on the reservation
- Lack of adequate and appropriate transportation
- Lack appropriate mental health and substance abuse services.
- Lack of Indian service providers
- Lack of commitment of the Tribal leadership in Child Welfare matters
- American Indians need to be bi-cultural in order to survive
- Bi-culturalism imposes emotional and psychological burdens on the individual

Service Provision

- Distances reservation/cities creates barrier between providers/clients
- Non-Indian agencies/governments need to come to the Reservation when engaging Tribal communities in solving problems
- Contact needs to be personal rather than by letter or flyer
- Social Workers providing services on the reservation are standing exactly where two cultures collide-can be explosive!
- Need to design programs that can be brought to the people
- Non-Indian providers lack knowledge about how to deliver culturally appropriate services

Youth Specific

- No planned transition for youth leaving system
- Family members need to step forward and get involved in youth's life
- Background checks for family members prevent them from participating in youth's life
- Youth lack preparation for independent living
- There is a need for mentors for the youth
- System norms vs. Tribal norms
- We need to be willing to alter our view of "success". What is *success* in the non-Indian world may not be *success* in the Tribal world.

"Historically, Native American foster youth from rural areas have experienced dismal outcomes.."

The information gathered will allow the Tribal STAR team to begin to develop curricula that will address the challenges and better prepare those providers who work with the Tribal foster youth to approach their work in a culturally competent manner and with an understanding of the challenges.

The Tribal STAR Project

The goal of Tribal STAR is to develop and implement a training program to enhance frontline and supervisory staff, as well as MSW student's capacity to provide effective child welfare services in rural Native American communities across the state of California. The training program will focus on the unique issues faced by rural Native American youth who are in or exiting foster care. In addition to the training, technical assistance will be provided to Native American service agencies and communities as they strive to integrate revised practice and policy into their service provision. Curricula development will include participation of stakeholders, including tribal representatives, Native American youth and foster parents, Native American providers, both public and private and non-Native providers that work with this unique population. The Tribal STAR project is funded for 5 years and its ultimate goal is to assist tribal communities and providers to increase positive outcomes for tribal youth who have been in foster care.

The acronym, **STAR**, stands for **S**uccessful **T**ransitions for **A**dult **R**eadiness. The STAR projects work towards training those providers, such as social workers, mental health workers, school personnel and so forth, who work with foster youth so that the youth experience positive outcomes when exiting foster care. Historically, Native American foster youth from rural areas have had dismal outcomes. One of the contributing factors is the inaccessibility of services and the fact that those services are not always culturally appropriate.

Tribal STAR will be addressing these issues as we develop curricula and prepare trainers. Tribal workers will also participate in the training.

The Tribal STAR Team

Dana Allen, Training Coordinator

Dana is the Training Coordinator for the Tribal STAR Training Project, a project of San Diego State University focusing on the development of training for those providing services to rural Tribal foster youth. Dana's background includes: Independent Living Program (ILP) Coordinator for San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services, Director of the Independent Living Skills Program with YMCA Youth and Family Services in San Diego, and Coordinator of the STAR (Successful Transitions for Adult Readiness) Interdisciplinary Training Project. She has served on several ILP Advisory Committees. "I am committed to working to ensure that all foster youth are given the opportunity to discover their greatest potential. I feel honored to have the opportunity to work closely with the Tribal community in an effort to improve outcomes for Native foster youth."





*"...all things
share the same
breath*

*....the beast, the
tree, the man*

*....the air shares
it's spirit with all
the life it
supports."*

*"Chief Seattle"
Dwamish*

Tom Lidot, Curriculum Coordinator

Tom is the Curriculum Coordinator for the Tribal STAR Training Project, a project of San Diego State University focusing on the development of training for those providing services to rural Tribal foster youth. He also serves as a consultant to local, state and national tribal programs. Mr. Lidot has over 17 years of non-profit experience working with tribes and tribal organizations. His body of experience is built on direct service expansion for healthcare programming, administration, and evaluation with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS, education, advocacy and cultural competency. "What I like about working on this project is that it makes our Native community the expert in knowing what the challenges are and how to resolve the gaps in service for rural Tribal foster youth who are becoming adults."

Rose-Margaret Orrantia, Assistant Project Coordinator

Margaret worked at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M. for 16 years. She held a number of positions while there. Returning to San Diego, in 1982, she became the Executive Director of Indian Child and Family Services (ICFS), a State Licensed Foster Family and Adoption Agency that served the American Indian population in San Diego and Riverside Counties. After leaving ICFS she served as a consultant and grant writer to Indian Tribes and non-profit agencies for eight years and as the Director of Foster Family and Adoption Agencies in the non-Indian world. Currently she works at the Academy for Professional Excellence, a program of the SDSU Foundation, as a member of the **Tribal STAR** team. "What interests me the most about working on this project is the idea that I can help in insuring that rural Tribal youth from our area will receive culturally appropriate services that will improve outcomes for them as they become adults, and that they will return to their Tribal communities as contributing members."

The Tribal STAR Team can be contacted at the following:

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The Tribal STAR Partners



In addition to Dana, Tom and Margaret, the Tribal STAR Team includes its **partners** in the project. These are: Indian Child & Family Services, Temecula, CA. The Executive Director is Luke Madrigal. The program provides Foster Care and Adoptions Services for Tribal children and youth as well as Family Preservation Services in the Riverside County area; Indian Health Council, Inc., Pauma Valley, CA. The Operations Director is Romelle Majel-McCauley. The clinic provides many health services as well as an Indian Child Welfare Act program, whose Director, Karan Kolb-Williamson, and members of her staff sit on the Tribal STAR Workgroup;



*The only thing
necessary for
tranquility in the
world is that
every child grows
up happy.*

*"Chief,
Dan George"*

the Indian Specialty Unit from Health and Human Services Agency, County of San Diego is also a partner. Robert White, Unit Supervisor, attends the Workgroup for the Indian Unit. Southern Indian Health Council, Inc. is also a partner and provides health services and other services and programs to its consortium members. Lydia Rochfort, Program Director for Indian Child Social Services is their representative to the Workgroup.

The collaborative relationship we have with our partners insures that the work of Tribal STAR is embedded in the community that we serve.

Meetings And Things

Tribal STAR will be hosting a celebration on September 21st to celebrate the completion of their first year of work. The event will be held at the Mission Trails Regional Park from 11:30 to 1:30. Invitations have been sent out, please RSVP by September 14th.

Support Your Local Programs

Valley Oaks Ranch a group home for American Indian girls has opened in Aguanga, in Riverside County. The Executive Director is Dennis Shieffer and the Administrator is Dennis June. They can be reached at (909) 303-8728. The Ranch is in a beautiful setting on a horse ranch. If you are a county social worker looking for a culturally appropriate placement for an American Indian girl, give them a call.

ICWA Training

David Casey, November 3, 2004 in Oceanside and December 2, 2004 in Riverside. Please call Anita Aldrich at the Public Child Welfare Training Academy at (619) 594-3631 for more information.

Upcoming Powwows

Schedule subject to change

William S. Hart Park
Newhall (north of LA)
Sept. 25 & 26

San Manuel Casino
Cal State U. San Bernardino
October 8, 9 & 10

Heritage Park
Santa Fe Springs (south of LA)
Nov. 5, 6 & 7

Veterans Gathering
Whittier Narrows
S. El Monte (south of LA)
Nov. 13 & 14

Trump 29 Casino
Coachella (next to Indian east of Palm Springs)
Dec. 10, 11 & 12

SDSU Foundation

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We're on the Web!

<http://pcwta.sdsu.edu>

The Tribal STAR Team welcomes items for the **Meetings and Things** portion of our newsletter. If your agency or organization has a meeting or event you would like posted in this section, please call or e-mail and we will do our best to make sure it is included.

This newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis. The next newsletter will go out in January, any items must be called in or e-mailed by the 3rd week of the month in order to appear in that quarter's newsletter.

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